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***Division of Aging***

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**To:** Division of Aging Adult Day Providers  
**From:** Darcy Tower, MSW, Provider Relations Director  
**Date:** April 28, 2020  
**Re:** Promoting social connection for clients without technology

Social isolation is a method to improve public health, but how can we combat the adverse effects of social isolation, especially in older adults, who are unable to utilize technology as a mode of connection during the COVID-19 quarantine?

Many Hoosiers have technology to fight against social isolation, but the Division of Aging understands that there are also a significant number of adult day clients who don't have access or are unsure how to use technology. During this social-distancing season, it is important to make sure that clients can have social connectedness, regardless of technology. The division would like to share the following suggestions for how to stay connected with technology-free clients while also monitoring their well-being, needs and health during isolation.

**Landline phones can still make clients happy and connected**

*(This activity may be billed as adult day services.)*

- Help clients schedule regular check-in times. Under typical circumstances, older adults often schedule these times to interact with their children, grandchildren, siblings, friends and others through phone calls. The scheduled times can even include adult day staff. These remote gatherings are even more important now. Older adults look forward to these interactions as they allow them to be part of their family's and friend's lives in real time. Learn from clients about people in their circle of support, and encourage and assist in maintaining that connection.
- Recognize the value of these check-in times for the loved ones of older adults too. Regularly scheduled times can give adult children and others peace of mind to be able to talk with and virtually see that their family member or friend is doing well.
- Understand the value of even short encounters. Brief interactions with older adults over the course of the day can be as effective as longer visits. A quick call to share a funny story, ask a question, provide a reminder, or comment on the day's episode of a favorite TV show helps keep people connected, even if they are unable to be in the same place



as their family and friends. Helping clients schedule these calls will ensure consistent communication is occurring each day.

- Broaden the focus of encounters. While older adults need to stay informed about COVID-19, it isn't helpful to have the pandemic become the primary focus of their social interactions. Talking about positive activities that will occur in the future, like going back to the adult day center, or spending time with family will help clients look forward to the better days ahead.

### **Engage children**

*(This activity may be billed as adult day services per quarter hour.)*

- Connect with client families who have grandchildren, or connect with a school willing to help with a project for older adults. With school closed for the time being, children can connect with older adults by talking on the phone, sending letters back-and-forth, sharing art and craft projects through the mail. Adult day centers may help clients and children find topics to write about or themes for craft projects. Children could use this time to record some family history with a grandparent.

### **Music activities**

*(This activity may be billed as adult day services per quarter hour.)*

- Check with clients on their ability to access music players. Do they have their own? Could a family or friend provide one to them?
- Talk with the client's care manager about using specialized medical equipment waiver service to purchase a Google Home for clients with internet access.
- Talk with clients about what kind of music they like and certain songs.
- Make a playlist for the client with these songs. Music is a powerful way to elicit positive emotions from older adults. Talk with family members about having grandchildren or neighbors make playlists that resonate with the client. The same activity can be done with a school if there is a classroom willing to participate in this activity.

### **Activity delivery**

*(This activity may be billed as Adult Day Services per quarter hour.)*

- On a nice day, spend time outside helping the client garden. Plant flowers, pull weeds or plant a vegetable garden.
- If client is ambulatory, take a walk with the client on a nice day.
- Pack a picnic lunch and eat outside with the client.
- Deliver arts and crafts and complete a project with the client.